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Dr. James Loudon

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Until within a few months almost any day during the last ten years a gentleman, evidently retired from active duties, might be seen walking up or down St. George Street and offering courteous and kindly greeting to those whom he met. A casual acquaintance would soon realise that this gentleman whose countenance bore the marks of refinement and high intelligence, interested as he was in painting and music, shrewd in his judgments of men and affairs, was no ordinary person. Even in this closing period, placid but still alert, Dr. Loudon often gave evidence how unusual had been the qualities of his life in its prime when he played a very conspicuous part in the educational movements of this Province and Dominion.

It was a finely rounded out career. He died suddenly in his own home in the city where he was born and was educated, where he used his splendid gifts, and came to be respected as one of its most honoured citizens.

He showed his natural endowments early in life and by careful discipline he easily won a place of distinction in school and university, his brilliant and reliable abilities always marking him out as the obvious person to fill the positions which were ready for him. So competent was he that thirteen years after graduation he became Professor of Mathematics, though he had had

no training abroad, and though hitherto such positions had been filled by graduates of British Universities. During his occupancy of the chair he continued to give proof of his ability both as a productive scholar and a clear teacher, but his preference lay in pure science, and though he had been a classical tutor and a professor of mathematics he is known now chiefly as having been a physicist of eminence. He also soon made his energy and breadth of view felt in the conduct of the policies of the University. From early days he was an advocate of laboratory instruction and was enamoured of scientific research. This is the more remarkable tribute to

Dr. Loudon's mind because at that time the scientific spirit was not strong in the University and he had not got his inspiration from any great teacher in an outside school.

Having in view the development of scientific research among the graduates Dr. Loudon suggested in 1882 that a system of fellowships should be established, which might ~~however~~ serve also as part-time tutorships to add to the teaching power of the University in its day of need. To him also was due the institution of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

But his interests extended beyond the pure sciences to the

applied sciences, though possibly he would agree with the recent words of the greatest of modern physicists, Sir J. J. Thomson, "research in applied science might lead to reforms; but research in pure science leads to revolutions". He had been deeply interested in the questions of policy that centred in the establishment of a Technical College, and eventually it was due to a report based on his visit made at the request of the Government to institutions abroad, and to his subsequent efforts that the School of Practical Science, now the Faculty of Applied Science, was established.

He looked beyond the sciences, however, and secured a much larger recognition in University College for the Modern Languages and a fairer treatment for Latin than the Council had been allowing.

I think that I am not wrong in saying that the period in his career to which Dr. Loudon would have looked back with the greatest satisfaction was that of the active Chancellorship of the Honourable Edward Blake from 1878 to 1892 when he left for England. For the Chancellor he had unbounded admiration. During these years he was Mr. Blake's chief adviser in academic matters and he had much to do with the epoch-making report of 1891, and finally on the death

of Sir Daniel Wilson Mr. Blake used his influence to have Dr. Loudon appointed to the Presidency of the University. The earlier years of this co-operation were a period of stress and strain, chiefly because of suspicions that were sown by inter-university rivalries, but side by side with Mr. Blake Dr. Loudon stood ever on the alert as an eager and effective champion of the rights of the Provincial University. Later also when negotiations for the confederation of the Universities were set on foot Mr. Blake asked Dr. Loudon to safeguard the interests of University College, and he took a large share in bringing about the present unique and satisfactory

condition of affairs in our University Federation.

Dr. Loudon tells us that when he became President he felt the loss of Mr. Blake extremely as he had not the strong backing he needed for carrying out the proposals on which he had set his heart. Until his retirement in 1906 he was always under the necessity of conducting the work of a growing university and maintaining high standards on a very insufficient revenue. It is remarkable that the results were so good. He took great interest in the development of the Faculty of Medicine and sought to place the study on a strong scientific basis and secure good clinical instruction. The Physics Laboratory was due to his initiative and this Convocation Hall was

planned before he laid down his office. Also he threw his energy into the formation of the Alumni Association, which was a much more difficult task than in other Universities because of the chequered history of this University and the variety of interests in the different institutions which ~~are~~ now its faculties. But he possessed unfailing courage and strong determination.

Dr. Iondon was a fine administrator. He got things done as a competent and thorough man gets them done, ~~though~~ and he was not ~~an office man~~ lost in detail, but had a broad view of the meaning and scope of a modern university. He had a clear mind and he envisaged

a large problem with the scientific accuracy that sees it whole.

From my own judgment formed by ~~an~~ our intercourse during the past nine and a Half years and from what I know of the present condition of the University I should say that Dr. Loudon's work was that of a thorough scientific man of the 19th century. There have been few men in Canada who have caught more of the spirit of that epoch. Whither science led he would follow. I cannot think of Dr. Loudon as pursuing educational fads nor as being attracted by new theories. Not that he had a rigid mind, tenacious of custom. Just the opposite. Whatever exact observation, grasp

of the factors of a problem and induction demanded he would accede to. But he was also a Canadian who knew his own country and could discern its educational necessities, as when he reached out from Applied Science to bring Forestry and Education within the University, and when in late years he acted on the Council of the College of Art.

A man is to be judged finally by those whose admiration he wins and the objects to which he devoted his best energies. Round him Dr. Loudon gathered a loyal group of his own students, men of unusual scientific accomplishment and administrative ability. His own loyalty to his University remained unswerving from the day he entered her walls through his long life.

Loudon

It is therefor fitting that he who lavished his fine talents on her in ~~He lavished on her also in most~~ unselfish affection ~~his fine gifts,~~ ~~and it is fitting that~~ he should be carried forth to his burial from this hall, already the scene of many great occasions in this University, erected through the interest of the Alumni, and on the walls of which there hangs his own portrait, one of the finest of Canadian pictures.

As we ~~carry~~ bear him hence from this scene of his labours our sympathy goes out to Mrs. Loudon in her bereavement and to the family who mourn a most affectionate father.